

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5773
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 03097

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PGOV PINT GW WB UR US
SUBJECT: HERBERT WEHNER'S COMMENTS ON THE BERLIN
SITUATION

REF: BONN 02381

BEGIN SUMMARY: SPD FRAKTION CHAIRMAN WEHNER MADE A
NUMBER OF COMMENTS ON THE BERLIN SITUATION DURING A
VISIT BY AMBASSADOR RUSH ON FEBRUARY 18. WEHNER FEELS
THAT DESPITE THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE WEST BERLIN POL-
ITICAL SITUATION SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE QUADRIPARTITE
AGREEMENT, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE IN THE CITY HAS
DETERIORATED. HE BLAMES WEST BERLIN POLITICIANS FOR AN
INABILITY TO BUILD A SENSE OF CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY
AMONG THE POPULACE. THE PRESENT ZIG-ZAG POLICIES OF THE
SPD ARE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS FOR THE PARTY AND THE CITY.
WEHNER FEELS THAT SCHUETZ AND BRANDT MUST COME TO GRIPS
WITH THE PROBLEM QUICKLY AND DECIDE IF SCHUETZ IS GOING
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TO REMAIN GOVERNING MAYOR OR NOT.

WEHNER STRESSED THE NEED FOR PRACTICAL IMPROVE-
MENTS IN BERLIN AND THE NECESSITY TO AVOID TAKING
ACTIONS WHICH SIMPLY SERVE TO WORRY THE SOVIETS WITHOUT
HELPING THE CITY. HE WAS POSITIVE ABOUT THE NEW SPD
BERLIN WORKING GROUP AND PLEDGED HIS SUPPORT FOR TAKING

THE NECESSARY PRACTICAL STEPS TO HELP THE CITY. WEHNER IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN EAST GERMANY AND EASTERN EUROPE WHICH COULD LEAD TO A DANGEROUS AND UNSTABLE POLITICAL SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING HIS VISIT TO BONN ON FEB. 17-18, AMBASSADOR KENNETH RUSH CALLED ON SPD PARLIAMENTARY GROUP (FRAKTION) CHAIRMAN HERBERT WEHNER. IN THE COURSE OF THE MEETING, WEHNER MADE A NUMBER OF COMMENTS ON BERLIN AND EAST-WEST RELATIONS, SOME OF WHICH ECHOED VIEWS HE RECENTLY EXPRESSED TO AMBASSADOR STOESSEL(REFTEL).

2. WEST BERLIN

-- THE POLITICAL SITUATION OF WEST BERLIN HAS VERY MUCH IMPROVED SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT. IN FACT, CONTRARY TO MUCH OF THE CRITICISM, THE CITY IS BETTER OFF THAN IT HAD BEEN AT ANY TIME IN POST-WAR HISTORY. HOWEVER, SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE QA, WEST BERLIN POLITICIANS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CREATE A SENSE OF SECURITY AND CONFIDENCE AMONG THE WEST BERLIN POPULATION. BECAUSE OF THIS PSYCHOLOGICAL SITUATION, THE POPULATION STRUCTURE OF THE CITY HAS SUFFERED. MANY YOUNGER PEOPLE LEAVE THE CITY FOR GREATER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC AND NOW THERE ARE MORE OLDER PEOPLE AND FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE CITY THAN EVER BEFORE. EVEN CIVIL SERVANTS POSTED IN WEST BERLIN WHO CAN AFFORD IT LEAVE BERLIN AND RETIRE
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IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC.

-- THE ANSWER TO HELPING THE CITY LIES IN FINDING

PRACTICAL STEPS WHICH WILL IMPROVE THE SITUATION IN BERLIN BUT NOT IN SEEKING CONFRONTATION WITH THE SOVIETS -- WHICH CAN ONLY CREATE A "FRONT LINE" MENTALITY.

BRANDT'S IDEA OF SETTING UP AN SPD BERLIN WORKING COMMITTEE TO LOOK INTO WAYS TO ASSIST BERLIN IS AN EXCELLENT ONE. WHEN WEHNER VOLUNTEERED TO SERVE ON THE COMMITTEE, SOME KEY SPD POLITICIANS WERE SURPRISED. HOWEVER, WEHNER FELT THAT THE COMMITTEE MIGHT DO SOMETHING FOR THE CITY IN A PRACTICAL AND REASONABLE MANNER.

THE VISIT OF THE SPD FRAKTION TO BERLIN AT THE END

OF JANUARY WAS SUCCESSFUL IN THAT IT GAVE THE DEPUTIES,
PARTICULARLY THE FRESHMEN DEPUTIES, A CHANCE TO OBSERVE
THE SITUATION ON THE SPOT. IT IS
EXTREMELY USEFUL FOR THEM TO THINK OF BERLIN IN HUMAN
TERMS RATHER THAN IN TERMS OF AN ABSTRACT IDEA. ONE
PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE INNOVATION DURING THIS FRAKTION
VISIT WAS THE BREAKING UP INTO SMALLER GROUPS AND
VISITING FACTORIES, SCHOOLS, ETC. TO GAIN SOME FIRST-

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 03097

HAND EXPERIENCE WITH THE PROBLEMS IN WEST
BERLIN.

-- WEHNER HAS CHARGED TWO OF THE FRAKTION DEPUTY
CHAIRMEN WITH THE TASK OF INVESTIGATING THE POSSI-
BILITIES IN EACH OF THE BUNDESTAG COMMITTEES FOR SEEKING
PRACTICAL STEPS TO ASSIST WEST BERLIN.

-- IN THE PAST THE BUNDESTAG HAS TAKEN SOME STEPS
WHICH HAVE DONE MORE HARM THAN GOOD FOR BERLIN. FOR
EXAMPLE, THE CALL BY A BUNDESTAG PRESIDENT FOR DIRECT
ELECTIONS OF BERLIN DEPUTIES TO THE BUNDESTAG WAS

CLEARLY AN UNHELPFUL MOVE AND ONLY FED SOVIET AND EAST
GERMAN SUSPICIONS. THE WHOLE FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL
OFFICE AFFAIR WAS A BIG MISTAKE AND SERVED TO
CONVINCE THE SOVIETS THAT THEY COULD NOT TRUST THE
WEST GERMANS.
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3. THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN WEST BERLIN.

-- THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN WEST BERLIN
IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS, BOTH FOR THE SPD AND FOR THE CITY
AS A WHOLE. KLAUS SCHUETZ AND WILLY BRANDT WILL SIMPLY
HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS AS TO
WHETHER SCHUETZ IS GOING TO REMAIN AS GOVERNING MAYOR
OR IS GOING TO RESIGN. BRANDT MUST TAKE DECISIVE
ACTION IN THIS ISSUE (COMMENT: WEHNER FEARS HE WILL
NOT). IT IS SIMPLY INTOLERABLE TO GO ON WITH THIS ZIG-
ZAG COURSE IN THE BERLIN SPD AND THE PARTY MUST PUT AN
END TO ITS POLICY OF "NONSENSE POLITICS." IF SCHUETZ
RESIGNS, SOMEONE MUST BE FOUND WHO IS NOT INVOLVED IN
THE INNER-PARTY STRIFE IN BERLIN TO TAKE OVER AND TO BE
THE CANDIDATE IN 1979.

4. EAST-WEST RELATIONS

-- THE WESTERN PART OF GERMANY HAS MANAGED TO GET
THROUGH THE WORLDWIDE RECESSION IN BETTER SHAPE THAN
MOST COUNTRIES, BUT EAST GERMANY AND EASTERN EUROPE ARE
HAVING SERIOUS ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. THE PRESENT
ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES HAVE CREATED POLITICAL
INSTABILITY WITHIN THE WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES. THE
COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS SIMPLY CANNOT AFFORD ANOTHER
SITUATION WHICH COULD LEAD TO EVENTS AS IN EAST BERLIN
IN 1953 AND IN HUNGARY IN 1956. THIS INABILITY
TO COPE WITH THEIR DOMESTIC ECONOMIC PROBLEMS COULD BE
DANGEROUS FOR EAST-WEST RELATIONS.
STOESSEL

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